



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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## ***SBA ADMINISTRATOR ALVAREZ AND VA DEPUTY SECRETARY GOBER SIGN AGREEMENT TO EXPAND SERVICES FOR VETERANS***

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) today announced the expansion of programs and services available to assist veterans in starting or growing a business through the signing of a partnership agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Association of Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs).

SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez, VA Deputy Secretary Hershel Gober, and Association of SBDC Executive Director Woodrow McCutchen signed the agreement with veterans advocate and Miss America 2000, Heather French, in attendance. The agreement calls for the SBA, the VA, and the Association of SBDCs to publicize the programs and services available to the veterans.

The agreement was signed as part of the implementation of the *Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999*, Public Law 106-50, which President Clinton signed into law on August 16, 1999.

**“With this agreement, we renew our commitment to helping veteran-owned small businesses and re-energize our campaign to bring awareness to veterans about the programs and services available to assist them,”** SBA Administrator Alvarez said. **“It is my goal that we work closely with the partner organizations representing the veterans community.**

**“We need to do a better job in reaching out to veterans — proactively — and making sure that they know how the SBA, the SBDCs, and the VA can help them attain their business goals,”** Administrator Alvarez stressed.

Under the agreement, the SBA will develop distance-learning tools and training for veterans and conduct studies on veteran-owned small businesses. The SBA currently is designing online classrooms tailored to the entrepreneurial needs of veterans as part of the agency’s small business classroom distance learning initiative at <http://classroom.sba.gov/>.

The agency will also assist veterans in finding procurement opportunities with federal, state, and local agencies. Veteran-owned small businesses currently can register in *PRO-Net*, SBA’s procurement database.

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Pro-Net provides a search engine that allows federal contracting officers and prime contractors to search for veteran-owned small businesses. Public Law 106-50 mandates a 3 percent federal procurement goal for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

The Association of SBDCs will establish an information clearinghouse to collect and distribute information on contracting opportunities with federal, state, and local governments and on subcontracting opportunities with the private sector. It also will provide training, counseling, and technical assistance to veterans on management, finance, marketing, export promotion, technology transfer, and other areas of business operation.

The VA will compile and distribute a list of products and services from small businesses owned by service-disabled veterans to federal procurement officials. It also will provide facilities for training.

The SBA currently has several programs in place to help veteran entrepreneurs.

The SBA's Veterans Business Outreach Program (VBOP) offers business training, counseling, technical assistance and mentoring to service-disabled veteran business owners through the services of four selected organizations located in New York, Virginia, Florida and Texas. The centers offer comprehensive programs on a one-to-one basis or to very small groups.

The SBA served roughly 72,000 veteran entrepreneurs in the last fiscal year through its affiliates: the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), the Business Information Centers (BICs), the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the Women's Business Centers (WBCs).

The SBDCs offer one-stop management and technical assistance to small businesses by providing a wide variety of information and guidance in central and easily accessible branch locations. SBDC assistance is tailored to the local community and the needs of individual clients. The program is a cooperative effort of the private sector, the educational community and federal, state, and local governments.

The BICs also provide assistance and advice at one-stop locations. They offer the latest in computer technology hardware and software and extensive small business reference materials at their facilities to help small business owners.

SCORE is a volunteer organization consisting of former and current business executives, knowledgeable in diverse areas, who offer one-to-one counseling to small business owners.

The WBCs provide business assistance and training focusing on the needs of women entrepreneurs.

The SBA also has a variety of loan guaranty programs to help veteran entrepreneurs. In the past seven years, SBA guaranteed nearly 50,000 loans to veterans for more than \$10 billion.

More information on SBA assistance to veterans and on Public Law 106-50 is available at [www.sba.gov/vets/](http://www.sba.gov/vets/).

*Additional information about SBA programs and services is available at SBA's Web site at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). Or call the **SBA Answer Desk** at **1-800-U-ASK-SBA**.*